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A

SERMON

Preach'd on *May* the 29*th.* 1673.

IN ONE OF

His Majesties

LICENS'D MEETINGS in *DEVON.*

LONDON,

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TO THE READER.

YOU *have this Sermon* verbatim, *as it was preach'd, and taken in* Short-hand. *The Author himself knows nothing of its Publication; so far was he from designing, or preparing it for that end. However he needs not be asham'd to see it abroad, 'twill recommend it self to all serious and ingenuous persons.*

Iſa. 40. 3.

The voice of him that cryeth in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make ſtrait in the deſart an High-way for our God.

THe Apoſtle *Peter* in his 2 *Epiſt.* 1 *ch.* 19 *v.* recommends unto the Faithful, to whom he wrote, the *word of Propheſie*, as he termeth it, and commends them for *heeding* of it; They *did well*, he ſaith, in ſo doing. That *word* which *Peter* means, is indeed *a light ſhining in this dark place of the Earth*, where we walk not by ſight; 'Tis the *great Foundation* of Faith, and Hope, until the day of Glory dawn, and we in Gods own Light, ſee all Light. But that worthy Recommendation the Apoſtle ſeconds in the two following Verſes, with a weighty Reaſon; *Knowing* (ſaith he) *that no Propheſie of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation*: That is, Not of any private humane Inven-

tion

tion, or Extraction; 'Tis not an effect of any mans *peculiar* temper, or more than *ordinary* skill, That this is meant, the after-words in the ſame Context do plainly evince; for, ſaith *Peter*, *The Propheſie in old time, came not by the will of man; but holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the holy Ghoſt.* The Spirit of God, (the publick Interpreter, and Revealer of the Counſel and Mind of God), He inſpired the Prophets, and was the Author of their word: The things (my Beloved) which are *reported* and *affirmed* in Scripture are (many of them) evidently Divine, The Heart of Man could not have *conceived* them: The Commands and Precepts in Scripture, are (many of them at leaſt) evidently Divine. The Spirit of a Man could not have formed them, nor enjoined them, as there they are. The Promiſes and Threatnings in Scripture have Characters of a Divine Original upon them in like manner, they could not be of Man; And I confeſs, I much incline to think, that the Apoſtle *Peter* comprehends even all theſe under the Propheſie of the Scriptures, which

which he ſpeaketh of. But Propheſie, in the ſtrict ſenſe of it, and Foretelling of things to come, This muſt needs have a *peculiar* Acknowledgment in this behalf. That of this nature, which is in Scripture, is, in the very eye of Reaſon, more illuſtriouſly Supernatural, and Divine. But I tarry too long in Generals.

The particular Text which I have been caſt upon for the preſent Time and Occaſion, for our holy *exerciſe* now, (my much Reſpected and Beloved) is of this Quality; A *little*, but a *remarkable* piece of a *remarkable Propheſie*; It is a few of the words which this Man of God *Iſaiah*, ſpake as he was moved by the Holy Ghoſt: And I cannot but conclude, from what hath been already intimated, That *we ſhall do well to give heed unto them.* Yea, if the ſame *Spirit* by which *Iſaiah* ſpake them, vouchſafe to aſſiſt us, in our poor degree, we ſhall profit by them.

The voice of him that cryeth in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, &c. Theſe are the words.

Now

Now at my entrance upon them, I doubt, I ſhall a little ſurpriſe you: For from a particular Prediction, (as the words are) I ſhall raiſe a general Doctrinal Obſervation; and the Obſervation I ſhall lay down, before I at all open the Prediction: The Obſervation too at firſt ſight, will ſeem to have no alliance with the Prediction: But I hope, upon a little progreſs ye will neither *wonder* at my *method*, nor *diſapprove* the *matter*. To me they have ſeemed *both* convenient. The Obſervation then, or Doctrine which I ſpake of, and ſhall begin with, is this:

Doct. That *God in the courſe of his Providence over the preſent World, doth make, ſometimes, Magnificent and Royal Manifeſtation of Himſelf.*

This I take to be a *genuine iſſue* of the words, and I make it a *foundation* for the *Expoſition* of them, and the *general Subject* of my Diſcourſe. The ſame God who is *named* and *concerned* in it, be preſent with us, and grant us ſome *encreaſe* in the *underſtanding* of his *word*, and in the

the *good knowledg* of *Himself*; even for *his goodneſs* ſake, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

But to the matter: I ſhall firſt clear the *expreſſion* of the Text, and of the Obſervation; and next, enquire into the *thing intended* by the Prophet; and laſtly, accommodate, as I may, the *whole* unto the preſent *occaſion*, and our *uſe*.

1. For the *expreſſion*: Great Princes do put forth their Princely Power and Wiſdom, in the ordinary, conſtant *government* of their People, and *ordering* their great Affairs; and they are hereupon *acknowledged*, and *awfully honoured* over all their Dominions: But ſometimes *they* come abroad, and appear in *ſpecial* Pomp, and Princely Glory; As when they Ride in State on ſpecial occaſions in Peace; or when they March in the Front of Puiſſant Armies unto War: Then the whole Country ſeeth them, and makes Shouts and Acclamations to them. (Beloved) God is the Great King, the Soveraign of the Univerſe, his Divine Power, and Wiſdom, and Righteouſneſs,

and Mercy do *operate* and *appear* in the *ordinary* courſe of Nature, and in his *common* governing and diſpoſing of all things: Oh that he might be *acknowledged* and *honoured* hereupon in all places of his Dominion. But ſometimes he *ariſeth*, as the expreſſion is, *Pſal.* 12. 5. ſometimes he *comes abroad*, as may be ſaid, and as indeed the term in effect is, *Pſal.* 96. 13. and divers other places. That is, he worketh ſometimes in an *unuſual* manner, in a manner *unthought* of, and above all *appearing Probabilities*; ſometimes, he ſheweth his Royal Greatneſs with Pomp, as I may ſpeak, that every one *ſeeth* and *admireth*, and ſaith, *'tis He*; ſometimes he doth *marvellous Acts*, *great things*, as the Scripture ſtileth them: Now, this I call his Magnificent and Royal Manifeſtation of Himſelf. And 'tis *ſuch* an effect that my Text refers unto, as doth evidently appear by what followeth in this ſame Prediction here, at the 5*th. ver. The glory of the Lord*, ſaith the Prophet, *ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together.* The *plenary* and *perfect* Manifeſtation of the Glory of God is to be

be in Heaven alone, there within the Vail, there only is the Beatifick Viſion of him; But even here on Earth without the Vail, ſome ſeaſons be, when he gives *ſignal* tokens of his Glory unto the *conviction* of men, and unto the high *affecting* of their hearts. Such an *event*, I ſay, the Prophet here in this Propheſie foretells. But to come nearer the words, I muſt advance a ſtep farther in that *reſemblance* of which I have made uſe: As Princes then when they go forth in State have the way prepared for them, and as much as may be made plain and commodious; there is a diligent cleanſing, and righting of every Street and every Road through which they are to paſs, and oftentimes Order is publickly given, Proclamation made unto that end, as ye know; ſo here, *The voice of him that cryeth in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord*, ſaith the Prophet. The purpoſe of God was repreſented to the Prophet under the *likeneſs* of a *Royal Progreſs* intended; and thus he in his rich and copious manner doth expreſs it; he intimates a *Proclamation* (as may be ſaid) to *clear*

 and

and *level* the way before the coming of the Lord: This is the voice of the *Cryer* here. Not that there ſhould be literally ſuch a thing in all that the Propheſie intendeth; But the meaning is, that God intended to manifeſt himſelf in a *Royal* and *Splendid* manner; would work in a *remarkable*, and an *unuſual*, and *magnificent* manner; 'tis ſaid, *Make ſtrait in the deſert an Highway for our God*; In the Deſert, where there was no way, nothing but *Hill* and *Dale*, nothing but *winding*, and *uneven*, and *unpaſſable* ground. He ſignifies, the Lord would do what there was no *viſible* means to do; would do what no one did imagine how it could be done. And this I take to be the true reaſon of the Prophets expreſſion; *Ye that attend unto it, judg of it.* God would reveal his Glory, as in a Royal manner; in token of this, *The voice* (ſaith the Prophet) *of him that cryeth, Prepare the way.*

Having taken this view of the *expreſſion*, we muſt next enquire into the thing *intended* in particular; Now ye may pleaſe to follow me, and obſerve to this end:

1. That God doth ſometimes *manifeſt Himſelf* as ye have heard, unto *Judgment*; *ſtrangely*, and *wonderfully* puniſhing the *Scandals*, and *Enormities*, and *Refractorineſs* of People. Of this you read in the 26*th*. Chapter of this *Propheſie* of *Iſaiah*, 21 *v*. *The Lord cometh out of his place*, (ſaith the Prophet there) (as the Soveraign and Judg of all the Earth) *to puniſh the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity*. Thus the Lord came forth when he brought the Flood upon the old World, *Gen*. 7. Thus when he deſtroyed *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and the other Cities of that Luxurious Plain, *Gen*. 19. Thus he came forth when he ſmote *Judah*, and *Jeruſalem*, and gave them up into the Hands of *Nebuchadnezzar*, 2 *Chron*. 36. 17. And thus again, when he overthrew, after ſome Threeſcore and ten years, the whole Empire of that ſame *Nebuchadnezzar*, and laid that great, proud *Babylon* he had built utterly waſte, *Jer*. 51. 25. And thus God will come, in due time, to Judg the *Grand Harlot* of the Earth, the *myſtical Babylon*, *Rev*. 17. 8. Gods *full revelation* of his Righteouſneſs

ouſneſs will be at the laſt, great Day: But mean time he will preſerve in the World ſome ſenſe that he is Juſt, and doth Judg. Beſides, at that great day, 'tis but particular Perſons that ſhall be Judged; There will be no States, and Kingdoms then; therefore the Lord viſits thoſe in the preſent World, where only they have their Exiſtence: And when the *meaſure* of the Impiety of Kingdoms is full, then he ſaith unto them, as he did to *Iſrael*, *Amos* 4. 12. *Prepare to meet your God, ye ſinful People.* He judgeth them with Terror, and there is no Counſel, nor Defence againſt him. Let not the moſt Proſperous, or Triumphant Nations be ſecure. But our preſent occaſion (Beloved), and that likewiſe to which my Text doth refer, is of no ſuch diſmal Nature. Therefore note,

2. Sometimes God *comes forth*, and *manifeſts Himſelf* in Magnifick Royal manner, to *ſhew mercy*, to *refreſh*, to *deliver*, to *reſtore*, to *build up*, to *bleſs*, and *put into a State of Renown upon Earth.* He is *good* with the very *goodneſs* of an Almighty and ever Bleſſed God; and ſometimes he

he makes *glorious*, and almoſt *incredible* Demonſtrations of it; Unto him be Glory. Thus he did when he firſt brought *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, and led them into their Inheritance, *Then his way was prepared in the wilderneſs indeed:* But with what *glororious Pomp* did he make his *Progreſs*: The *ſtrength* of *Egypt*, that ancient mighty Kingdom was utterly broken, and fainted; the Waters of the *Red Sea* were divided, and caſt up in Heaps on one Hand, and on the other; the Mountains did burn and ſhake; the Clouds and Sky thundered; Nations upon every ſide did tremble; All Nature did Reſent the Preſence of the God of *Jacob*; ſo wonderfully did he work for that People then. Here was a right *Stately*, *Royal ſhewing forth* of his *Magnificence* and *Soveraignty*. Other paſſages of a like kind, I might recount. But,

There are, particularly, two concerned in my Text, and them I muſt particularly inſiſt upon a little: The firſt of them, (Good Brethren)

thren), was, The Lords bringing back that ſame People of *Iſrael* from their Captivity in *Babylon*: This was ſuch a *manifeſtation* of him, as I have ſpoken of. Now that we may take a little account hereof, pray conſider the Calamity of that People; when they had been, as it were, long ſick, and weakned, by divers ſad events; they were in the cloſe (as I may ſay) *utterly ſlain*: *Multitudes* fell by the *Sword*; *multitudes* dyed with *Famine*; *multitudes* with *Peſtilence*; and the ſorrowful *remainder* were carried away *Slaves* into a ſtrange Land; their own in the mean time was devoured, and laid quite waſte; their Cities were burnt with Fire; and (oh the grief of all) *Jeruſalem* it ſelf, and the *Temple* in it, (both rich Cabinet, and rare Jewel) were conſumed together. Then the appointed Publick Service of God did utterly ceaſe, and there was left no ſolemn Aſſembly in all the World to worſhip him. This was doleful, and verily deſerving a whole Book of Lamentations. But think farther of their *hopeleſneſs* in this heavy caſe; The Dry Bones in the Viſion of *Ezekiel*

Ezekiel 37th. *chap.* were an apt *Emblem* of their *Condition.* There was no likelihood at all of their *Reviving*; There appeared no *way*, no *means* in the Earth for their *deliverance.* Well might *Jeremiah* expreſs it as he did, and ſay, *Lam.* 1.2. *The daughter of Zion weepeth ſore in the night, and the Tears are on her Cheeks, and among all her Lovers there was none to comfort her.* None at all, this was *dark night* indeed, horrour of darkneſs, and to ſay true, *a ſhadow of death.* But notwithſtanding all the *provocations* that had been on their parts, and notwithſtanding all this *wrath* on Gods part, yet he did determine to be Himſelf a *Light* unto them. He had taken order indeed aforehand by our Prophet that they ſhould be comforted, effectually comforted, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, ſaith your God, ſpeak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem.* I, but how ſo? *Cry unto her that her warfare is accompliſhed, that her iniquity is pardoned,* Iſa. 40. 1, 2. It was foretold there ſhould be an end, and iſſue out of even this their great, and deſperate calamity. Oh but could that be, was there any poſſibility of

it! Yes. The Lord undertook to do it himſelf, to come in royal manner and do it; And as he *undertook* ſo he *performed.* He came in due time, and at his coming obſtacles were *removed*, bonds *looſed*, dry bones *gathered fleſh*, and *lived*, *Judah* was *delivered.* He blaſted the Glory of the *Caldeans* that had brought this calamity upon them, and that became as the flower of the field, *verſ. the 8th.* And he inclined the ſpirit of that generous victorious *Perſian* to ſet them at liberty. And ſo thoſe *Jews* as from their Graves returned to their dear Country. *Jeruſalem* and the *Temple* roſe up out of their Aſhes, were again builded, God was worſhipped again, their dark night became light. At this the *Jews* themſelves were raviſht; They ſung, *When the Lord turned the Captivity of Zion then we were like them that dream.* And the Heathen on each ſide of them were aſtoniſht, and convinc'd at it, and acknowledged the God of Iſrael. Then ſaid they among the Heathen, *The Lord hath done great things for them*, Pſal. 126. 1, 2.

Lo,

Lo, here was, (my Beloved) here was a *Magnificent* and *real Manifeſtation* of God, a *making bare of his Arm, ſo as all fleſh ſaw it.* Here was a King-like coming forth of God to ſhew his People mercy; And well might the Prophet ſay, *The voice of one crying in the Wilderneſs, Prepare the way.* This is one particular which is directly and primarily intended, in the Text, and in this Propheſie; And who ſhould deſpair of the Church of God, even at the loweſt ebb. But this was that I ſay which the Prophet did primarily, and (as I may term it) literally here foretell; but God had yet a greater Myſtery in it, and guided the words of the Prophet ſo as to ſignifie the ſame withal. The truth is, (Brethren) Gods great purpoſe was to ſend his own Son into the world, and therefore his works, and (generally) all his words from the beginning had a *Tincture* of, and *Reference* to this. Many times when other things were uppermoſt, and moſt in view, yet they were but as the *Shell*, this was as the *Kernel* incloſed in them. The greateſt *Reference* lay to our bleſſed

Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Now thus it was in this *Prediction* which I am handling, *Deliverance from the Captivity of Babylon*, lay uppermoſt, and was firſt in ſight, but under it was ſignified, *The coming of the Meſſiah*, and of the *Kingdom of Heaven by him*. This is the ſecond, the other great particular, of which I gave you intimation. Our Lord and Saviour the Son of God, ('tis true) came in great meanneſs, and the very form of a Servant, ſo he lived, and ſo he died. Let no perſon ever grudg to be put into a mean eſtate. He came in great abaſement, but never was the like *Manifeſtation* of God from the beginning, nor ſhall be to the end. That very meanneſs there was, made it more marvelous and magnificent. God was, God was in that *deſpiſed* in that *Crucified Jeſus*, as never in any other. God was in him *Reconciling* the world unto himſelf; *Breaking* the Head of the old Serpent, and *deſtroying* his work, *laying* the Foundations of new Heavens, and a new Earth. God was in him *executing*, and *acting*, thoſe great things upon which the hope of all

former

former ages had been builded, and the faith of all after-generations was to be fixed; things that neither eye had ſeen, nor ear heard, nor heart of Man could ever have conceived, if God himſelf had not revealed them. Nay, the ſame Jeſus was *very God, manifeſted in the fleſh*; Oh magnificent, beyond compare, and divinely royal coming forth of the moſt High into the World! who is able to ſet forth, or to conceive all the glory of it. Men and Angels ſhall to eternity admire, and praiſe him for it.

But (Beloved) in this my Text for its part was very punctually fulfilled, and more expreſly than it had been at the deliverance from *Babylon*. Before this coming of God in Jeſus Chriſt, *John* the *Baptiſt* really was, *the voice of one crying in the Wilderneſs, Prepare the way of the Lord make his paths ſtraight.* This the ſame *John* affirmed of himſelf, *Joh.* 1.23. And this the other Evangeliſts with one conſent affirm likewiſe of him, *Mat.* 3. 3. *Mar.* 1. 3. *Luk* 3. 4. The coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, therefore, was a thing eminently *intended* in this Propheſie. And then,

if

if ever the glory of the Lord was revealed, and all fleſh did, or well might ſee his Salvation.

Now thus you may ſee the Text competently opened, and the obſervation which I have raiſed, alſo cleared, and verified, *God in the courſe of his Providence over the preſent world, doth ſometimes make magnifick and royal Manifeſtations of himſelf*; he hath ſo done indeed.

Now my dear Country-men and Friends, a paſſage, I will not ſay *equal*, but in a *degree* of this nature, a paſſage of this nature in our own Land, the *preſent day* of the *Year* doth bring to our *Remembrance*.

To exaggerate and to exalt the Acts and Succeſſes of Kings and Rulers, above their *juſt meaſure* is an immodeſt and ignoble flattery; On the other hand to depretiate and to debaſe them below their *real value* is groſs injury and malignity. The reſpects of Decency and Equity, of Conſcience, and Religion, engage us to weigh the truth in all things, and judg according thereunto; this I have aimed to do. And hereupon,

I muſt

I muſt needs ſay, *That the reſtoring of Royal Government in our Land*, and *the reſtoring of it in the Royal Perſon of our Soveraign*, this was a *Magnifick and royal effect of the hand of God*, by whom Kings raign. Ye that are of Age may remember what our condition was. If ſome things did pleaſe *a part* of theſe Nations, yet the *whole body* reeled to and fro as having no firm ground to ſtand upon; We were as if theſe brave Iſlands had been taken off from their ancient bottom, and floated, and been driven here and there on the Seas that do ſurround them. The moſt partial (I perſwade my ſelf) cannot, will not, gainſay it. The *Setling* of Authority and Rule upon a *ſteady Baſis*, is the *real ſtrength* and *confirmation* of States and Kingdoms, 'tis of bottom conſequence unto all their welfare. And when for want of this Mens Hearts did well nigh fail at home, and Enemies did deride, and contemn, and deſign upon us from abroad, it pleaſed God himſelf to interpoſe, and *to prepare a way in the Deſart*, a way where none was. It pleaſed God to come him-

himſelf, and to re-erect the Throne, and to place our dear Country upon its proper Baſis, to fix our Government; as if hereto had been *the voice of him that crieth.* The way was in an unuſual, in an unthought of manner prepared prepared ſuddenly, Hearts *inclined*, Obſtacles *removed*, and the thing *effected*. I know (Beloved) ye are ready to join with me in a juſt Acclamation to it, and to ſay, It was the Lords doing, and is memorable in our account. 'Tis plain, God would not have it done by Plots or Inſurrecti ons, or force of Arms, he would not have the Kings way ſmoothed with the Peoples blood. No, the God of Peace determined to bring, and brought home the King in Peace: He is that *God that ruleth in all the Kingdoms of th. World, and doth even whatſoever pleaſeth him.* Let us humbly and earneſtly beſeech him to *Preſerve* the KING, to *ſtabliſh* the Throne, to be *gracious* to our dear Country; to *ſecond* his former wonderful works, with *renewed effects* of his Divine Preſence in all our need. Let us beſeech him, that he pleaſe to make both *Head* and

Body

Body, both *Soveraign*, and *Subjects* faithfully mindful of, grateful for, anſwerable to his great Obligations upon them; they are great indeed, and what ſhould *England* render, All, both its Princes, and People for his Benefits towards them. But (my Beloved) for our ſelves, ye know Religion, as to the *main* of it, is, reſpect for, and nearneſt to God moſt high. He ſheweth himſelf in his ordinary works, and his tokens are new every morning. But ſometimes he reveals his Glory, convinceth very Heathens themſelves. He plainly manifeſted his Glory in Chriſt Jeſus with unſpeakable Grace; Oh *know* we him, and encreaſe in that *knowledg* of him; *Believe* him, and *encreaſe* in that *believing* him; *Fear* him, and *encreaſe* in that *fear* of him; Be near him in heart and life, and encreaſe in that divine nearneſs to him; Let our Religiouſneſs be in *reality*, for that God, the great object of it really is, is *really* glorious, *really* governeth now, and will judg with ſupream Authority hereafter. Be *indeed* a godly Peo-

ple, ſince he *indeed* is God, and filleth every Age and Country with ſuch Tokens of his Glory. Withal, truſt we in him, He hath often done great things, things unlookt for, unthought of; He hath appeared to *help* the *needy* when there was no other help at all *appearing*. In the Churches, or in your own loweſt Condition be not diſmayed, nor let your hearts fail within you.

To cloſe all for this time. Let me be in my poor meaſure *the voice of one that crieth*, and (much reſpected and beloved in Chriſt) *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*; For your parts, (not to ſpeak of other things) God cometh to you in the Goſpel, mighty to ſave; Oh let his way be ready that your Souls may live and rejoyce in his Salvation; Jeſus Chriſt cometh in the Sacrament, ye that are particularly concerned, *Prepare his way*, examine, humble ye, reform ye, covet freſh evidences, and enſuring of your Union with him, that ye may draw nigh, and make his faithful pledges unto you, and feed your Soul

Soul unto eternal life. All of us, one with another in the name of God, and his Chriſt prepare we for his *laſt*, and *greateſt*, his moſt *Magnifick* and *Royal Manifeſtation of himſelf.* Prepare we for that dreadful day when Chriſt ſhall appear in the Clouds, and all Nations be gathered before him, and every Soul receive according to what hath been done in the Body, make ready in ſimplicity, and with earneſt endeavour now, ſtrive to be, and to do in all things, that ye may be then found in peace, without ſpot, and blameleſs, and be taken into his own, eternal, bleſſed Kingdom, which can never be troubled, never be ſhaken.

Now, the Lord himſelf *teach* you all, and *direct* your Hearts, and *Prepare your way*, and be in the midſt of you to all gracious ſaving Purpoſes for his Names ſake. *Amen.*

FINIS.